

LISTING OF CLAIMS

The following listing of claims replaces all previous versions, and listings, of claims in the present application.

1. (Original) A drive circuit for driving a switching element comprising:
a high-side switching circuit connected between power supply lines;
a low-side switching circuit connected in series with said high-side switching circuit through an output terminal leading to the switching element;
and
a voltage detector detecting a voltage appearing at the output terminal, wherein said low-side switching circuit is controlled to be turned off when the voltage detected by said voltage detector is lower than an off-decision voltage which is defined within a voltage range in which the switching element is in an off-state.
2. (Original) A drive circuit as set forth in claim 1, wherein said low-side switching circuit includes an output transistor, a predriver driving the output transistor, a comparing circuit comparing the output voltage detected by said voltage detector with the off-decision voltage, and a logic circuit controlling an operation of the predriver base on a result of comparison in the comparing circuit.
3. (Original) A drive circuit as set forth in claim 2, wherein the comparing circuit is implemented by a comparator.
4. (Original) A drive circuit as set forth in claim 2, wherein the comparing circuit includes a decision transistor having a control terminal into which the output voltage detected by said voltage detector is inputted.
5. (Original) A drive circuit as set forth in claim 1, wherein said voltage detector is implemented by a voltage divider made up of resistors.
6. (Original) A drive circuit for driving a switching element comprising:
a high-side switching circuit connected between power supply lines;
a low-side switching circuit connected in series with said high-side switching circuit through an output terminal leading to the switching element;
and
a voltage detector detecting a voltage appearing at the output terminal; wherein said high-side switching circuit is turned off when the voltage detected by said voltage detector is higher than an on-decision voltage which is defined within a voltage range in which the switching element is in an on-state.

7. (Original) A drive circuit as set forth in claim 6, wherein said high-side switching circuit includes an output transistor, a predriver driving the output transistor, a comparing circuit comparing the output voltage detected by said voltage detector with the on-decision voltage, and a logic circuit controlling an operation of the predriver base on a result of comparison in the comparing circuit.
8. (Original) A drive circuit as set forth in claim 7, wherein the comparing circuit is implemented by a comparator.
9. (Original) A drive circuit as set forth in claim 7, wherein the comparing circuit includes a decision transistor having a control terminal into which the output voltage detected by said voltage detector is inputted.
10. (Original) A drive circuit as set forth in claim 6, wherein said voltage detector is implemented by a voltage divider made up of resistors.
11. (Amended) A drive circuit for driving a switching element comprising:
 - a high-side switching circuit connected between power supply lines;
 - a low-side switching circuit connected in series with said high-side switching circuit through an output terminal leading to the switching element;
 - and
 - a voltage detector detecting a voltage appearing at the output terminal;
 - wherein said low-side switching circuit is turned off when the voltage detected by said voltage detector is lower than an off-decision voltage which is defined within a voltage range in which the switching element is ~~turned off~~ in an off state, and
 - wherein said high-side switching circuit is turned off when the voltage detected by said voltage detector is higher than an on-decision voltage which is defined within a voltage range in which the switching element is ~~turned on~~ in an on state.
12. (Original) A drive circuit as set forth in claim 11, wherein said low-side switching circuit includes an output transistor, a predriver driving the output transistor, a comparing circuit comparing the output voltage detected by said voltage detector with the off-decision voltage, and a logic circuit controlling an operation of the predriver base on a result of comparison in the comparing circuit.

13. (Original) A drive circuit as set forth in claim 11, wherein said high-side switching circuit includes an output transistor, a predriver driving the output transistor, a comparing circuit comparing the output voltage detected by said voltage detector with the on-decision voltage, and a logic circuit controlling an operation of the predriver base on a result of comparison in the comparing circuit.
14. (Original) A drive circuit as set forth in claim 13, wherein the comparing circuit includes a decision transistor having a control terminal into which the output voltage detected by said voltage detector is inputted.
15. (Original) A drive circuit as set forth in claim 11, wherein said voltage detector is implemented by a voltage divider made up of resistors.
16. (New) A drive circuit as set forth in claim 1, wherein said high-side switching circuit is also controlled to be turned off during the off state of the switching element so that no current flows through either said high-side switching circuit or said low-side switching circuit when the voltage detected by said voltage detector is lower than the off-decision voltage.
17. (New) A drive circuit as set forth in claim 11, wherein said high-side switching circuit is also controlled to be turned off during the off state of the switching element so that no current flows through either said high-side switching circuit or said low-side switching circuit when the voltage detected by said voltage detector is lower than the off-decision voltage.
18. (New) A drive circuit as set forth in claim 1, wherein said low-side switching circuit is turned on for dissipating electric charges from a switching element gate capacitor when the switching element is switched to the off-state.
19. (New) A drive circuit as set forth in claim 11, wherein said low-side switching circuit is turned on for dissipating electric charges from a switching element gate capacitor when the switching element is switched to the off-state.
20. (New) A drive circuit as set forth in claim 1, wherein said low-side switching circuit and said high-side switching circuit comprise bipolar transistors that are selectively turned on and off by controlling respective base currents thereof.
21. (New) A drive circuit as set forth in claim 6, wherein said low-side switching circuit and said high-side switching circuit comprise bipolar transistors that are selectively turned on and off by controlling respective base currents thereof.

22. (New) A drive circuit as set forth in claim 11, wherein said low-side switching circuit and said high-side switching circuit comprise bipolar transistors that are selectively turned on and off by controlling respective base currents thereof.

23. (New) A drive circuit as set forth in claim 6, wherein said low-side switching circuit is also controlled to be turned off during the on state of the switching element so that no current flows through either said high-side switching circuit or said low-side switching circuit when the voltage detected by said voltage detector is higher than the on decision voltage.

24. (New) A drive circuit as set forth in claim 11, wherein said low-side switching circuit is also controlled to be turned off during the on state of the switching element so that no current flows through either said high-side switching circuit or said low-side switching circuit when the voltage detected by said voltage detector is higher than the on decision voltage.

25. (New) A drive circuit as set forth in claim 6, wherein said high-side switching circuit is turned on for charging a switching element gate capacitor when the switching element is switched to the on state.

26. (New) A drive circuit as set forth in claim 11, wherein said high-side switching circuit is turned on for charging a switching element gate capacitor when the switching element is switched to the on state.